

The Kaiser's Memoirs

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KAISER'S MEMOIR INTERVIEW

One of the most startling incidents of the Kaiser's reign was the interview with him printed in the London "Times" on September 28, 1918. In it he said that "Kriegsgeheimnis" in giving rein to suspicious unworthy of a great nation, and that "the prevailing sentiment among large sections of the middle and lower classes of my own people is not friendly to England. I am, therefore, so to speak, in a minority in my own land, but it is a minority of the best elements, just as it is in England with respect to Germany." German opinion was, he admitted, "entirely hostile" to England during the war, and that the German people, if he had permitted them to express their opinion, would have formulated a plan of campaign in South Africa which Lord Roberts adopted in substance.

The Kaiser was quoted in this interview as expressing his opinion that a large fleet chiefly on account of the far eastern situation.

The interview was republished in official German organs, and caused as great a stir in Germany as it did in England. There were many on it in the Reichstag and one or two "investigations."

Bulow finally did the great trick of bringing conservatives and liberals together in Germany, thus getting a majority for the parties siding with the government. In doing so, the great abilities of the Kaiser, his skill, statescraft and shrewd knowledge of men, which he had acquired in his long reign, were rendered by him in achieving this success won him thorough appreciation and gratitude from his country, and an increase of his trust in him.

The Kaiser's delight of the people of Berlin in the defeat of the social democrats at the polls led to the social democratic demonstration which I shall never forget, in front of my automobile, in the course of which my automobile had to force a way for itself, little by little, amid a cheering crowd of many thousands surrounding it. The Lustgarten was packed with great multitudes of people, at whose tumultuous request the Kaiser, I had to appear on the balcony in order to receive their homage.

The Kaiser was present at the visit of King Edward VII to Kiel. Among the many guests was the former chief court marshal of the emperor, Frederick Count Seckendorff, long acquainted with Edward VII through his many visits to England, who reported great trust in the count.

This gentleman, at the behest of Bulow, with whom he was friendly, arranged an interview between the king and the Kaiser. It took place on board the royal English yacht after a breakfast to which I and the Kaiser were invited. Both gentlemen sat for a long time alone and in silence. Afterward Bulow reported to me what had transpired at the interview. In discussing the possible conclusion of an alliance between Germany and England, the king, he told me, had stated that such a thing was not at all necessary in the case of our two countries, since there was no real cause for enmity or strife between them. This refusal to make an alliance was a plain sign of the English policy of enmeshment, which soon made itself felt clearly and disagreeably at the Algeiras conference. The pro-French and anti-German attitude of England, which there came out into the open, was due to special orders from King Edward VII, who had sent Sir D. MacKenzie Wallace to Algeiras as his "superintending representative," equipped with personal instructions.

From hints given by the latter to his friends it turned out that it was the king's wish to oppose Germany strongly and support France at every opportunity. When it was pointed out to him that it might be possible, after all, to take up with Germany this or that question and perhaps come to an understanding, he replied that, first of all, came the Anglo-Russian alliance; that, once that was assured, an "arrangement" might be made with Germany also. The English "arrangement" consisted in the encirclement of Germany.

His Friendship With Bulow. The relations between me and the Kaiser remained trustful and friendly throughout this period. He was present repeatedly at the Kiel regatta. Here, he found occasion, among other matters, to confer with the prince of Monaco and a number of influential Frenchmen, who were guests aboard the prince's yacht, among whom doubtless the eminent was M. Jules Roche, the leading expert on European politics, and a great admirer of

Goethe. He always carried a copy of "Faust" in his pocket. In April, 1906, came the unfortunate collapse in the Reichstag of the overworked Chancellor. As soon as I received the news, I hurried there and was glad that Privy Councillor Bismarck could give me encouraging news about Bulow's condition. While the prince was recuperating during the summer at Nordsee, I went from Heligoland, which I had been inspecting, on a torpedo boat to the island and surprised the Chancellor and his wife at their villa. I spent the day in chatting with the Chancellor, who had already recovered his health to an encouraging degree and was browned by the sea air and sunlight.

In the late autumn of 1907 the emperor and I paid a visit to Windsor, at the invitation of King Edward VII. We were most cordially received by the English royal family and the visit went off harmoniously. After this visit I went for rest to the castle of Highlife, belonging to Gen. Stewart Wortley, situated on the south coast of England, opposite The Needles.

Before my departure for England, the Chancellor, who was much pleased at the English invitation, had long talks with me as to the best way for getting on a better footing with England, and had suggested to me a number of his desires and projects, to serve me as guide in my conversations with Englishmen. During my visit I had frequent occasion to discuss the subjects agreed upon with the Chancellor, as desired by the Chancellor. Cipher telegrams containing my reports on these conversations went regularly to Berlin and I repeatedly received from the Chancellor approving telegrams. I used to show these after the evening meal to my intimates who accompanied me on my visit; these men, among them the Chief Court Marshal Count Eulenberg and Prince Max August Fürstberg, read them and rejoiced with me at the harmonious understanding between me and the Chancellor.

After my return from England I made a general report to the Chancellor, whereupon he expressed to me his thanks for my having personally troubled myself so much and worked so hard towards improving the relations between the two countries.

A Break With Bulow. The relationship between emperor and Chancellor, excellent and amicable up to that time, was, at all events, disturbed. I gave up personal relations with the Chancellor and confined myself to official dealings. After consultation with the minister of the royal household and the chief of the cabinet, I resolved to follow Prince Fürstberg's advice as to getting together the Highlife dispatches, and charged the foreign office with this task. It failed of accomplishment because the dispatches in question were not to be forwarded.

Toward the end of the winter the Chancellor requested an audience with me. I walked up and down with him in the picture gallery of the palace, between the pictures of my ancestors, of the battles of the Seven years' war, of the proclamation of the empire at Versailles, and was amazed when the Chancellor, having back to the events of the Autumn of 1918 and undertook to explain his attitude.

Thereupon I took occasion to talk with him about the entire past. The frank talk and the explanations of the prince satisfied me. The result was that he remained in office.

The Chancellor requested that I dine with him that evening, as I had so often done before. In order to show the outer world that all was again well, I did so. A pleasant evening, enlivened by the visibly delighted princesses with charming amiability, and by the prince with his usual lively, witty talk, closed that memorable day. Alluding to the prince's audience with

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When matters had reached an impossible pass, the Chancellor drew the proper conclusions and recommended to me the choice of Herr von Bethmann as the fifth Chancellor.

me, a wag wrote later in a newspaper, parodying a famous line: "The tear flows, Germania has me again."

By this reconciliation I also wished to show that I was in the habit of sacrificing my own sensitiveness to the good of the cause. Despite Prince Bulow's attitude toward me in the Reichstag, which was calculated to pain me, I naturally never forgot his eminent gifts as a statesman and his distinguished services to the fatherland. He succeeded, by his skill in avoiding a world war at several moments of crisis, during the period indeed, when I, together with Tirpitz, was building our protesting fleet. That was a great achievement.

A serious epilogue to the above-mentioned episode was provided by the conservatives. The civil cabinet informed the party leaders of the Chancellor's audience and what happened there, with the request that the party might now take back its "open letter." This request, which was made solely in the interest of the crown, not of myself personally, was declined by the party. Not until 1916, when the war was under way, did we get into touch again, through a delegate of the party, at great general headquarters.

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